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NIO/EUR
14 October 1986The 30th Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolt

The anniversary later this month of the events which brought Kadar to power could see embarrassing demonstrations -- like those last March -- and tough police responses. The public mood is depressed over economic stagnation and the opposition is raising taboo questions about the brutal suppression of the revolt.

Kadar so far has tried a mix of preemptive accommodation and confrontation. In recent media interviews, for example, hardliners expressed their disagreement with the purge of Imre Nagy in 1954 -- a rare, favorable, mention of an unrehabilitated "class enemy." Regime pronouncements stress that the bloodshed and human tragedy of 1956 are a lesson in the fruits of extremism that all true patriots have absorbed. But the regime hierarchy also has warned the more daring dissidents that they will go to jail if they make serious waves.

Even if the leading dissidents comply and hold their commemorations in small indoor seminars, the regime cannot rest easy. The demonstrations last spring were spontaneous with young people taking the lead. The youth are less enamored with Kadarism than their elders and tend to regard the compromises made since 1956 as a sellout of national aspirations. The youth thus are more aggressive than most established dissidents and are more influenced by radical opposition leaders.

- Public demands for an open investigation of the execution of Imre Nagy and revelation of the whereabouts of his secret burial place would risk a sharp regime reaction. (Kadar has sacked close lieutenants in anger at past public discussion of these issues.)
- An explicitly anti-Soviet demonstration would also draw security police and militia into the picture.

Kadar might try some surprises to distract attention from the anniversary. [REDACTED] a leadership shakeup might occur soon -- there is to be a plenum the week before the anniversary and a shakeup of his economic reform brain trust is widely rumored. The regime needs some boost for its image and it has lobbied Washington recently for a Kadar meeting with the President -- a dramatic turnabout from previous reluctance to even discuss such an event.

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